

## ABORTION

Family First is committed to promoting the ideal that the duty of health carers is to promote health, relieve suffering and safeguard life.

Family First will seek to promote recognition and valuing of the inherent dignity of each human being from conception. In this context, Family First is opposed to the medical procedure of abortion.

Family First understands that this issue is controversial and emotive, and a matter of deep personal sensitivity to many people especially women. However Family First recognises that many women are deeply hurt by the widespread promotion of abortion as the solution to crisis pregnancies and by their own experience of abortion.

Family First calls for a greater commitment to support women in their time of pregnancy and as mothers so that their life choices and financial and educational prospects are not jeopardised by the decision to keep their unborn child.

Family First notes that high common law standards apply to the question of informed consent in Australia. This law states that patients need to be informed of all risks that might impact on their decision to consent to a medical procedure. In the case of *Rogers v Whitaker* (1992) [175 CLR 479](#), the High Court ruled that failure to warn the patient of a 1 in 14000 chance of suffering the adverse outcome meant that the patient was not able to give informed consent. This law clearly refutes the notion that medical professionals are to be the judge of what is relevant to a person's decision to consent to a medical procedure.

Family First believes that in regard to the practical realities of the practice of abortion in this country, these high standards have routinely been disregarded. This high standard for informed consent has been welcomed by patient's rights advocates and sets a high standard of respect for individuals considering a medical procedure. This standard rejects a traditional culture of doctor patient relations in which the doctor, alone, was considered free to judge what was in the best interests of the patient without any reference to the concerns of the patient.

Family First believes the matter of abortion and the free and informed consent required under the law must be considered in light of the medical evidence that is currently available today.

Family First recognises that many women have privately held regrets about their own abortions. Many experienced strong pressure and coercion from life circumstances, partners, parents or professionals to proceed with abortion. Some women also live with a degree of grief over their decision, a grief which is harder to bear because its expression is perceived as prohibited by pro-abortion advocates.

Family First will support funding and expansion of counselling services to assist women with post abortion grief.

Family First will support the introduction of more effective screening for cases of coercion in pre abortion counselling.

Family First believes that a woman who has sought medical advice should be advised of the following as a minimum to ensure that women considering abortion are able to give truly free and informed consent and so as to avoid regrets:

1. Comprehensive information on the nature of the termination procedure.
2. A woman should be given comprehensive and accurate information about foetal development and assistance in relating that information to the stage of her own pregnancy in light of current medical evidence. In particular, women should be given the opportunity to view an ultra sound of the woman's foetus prior to any decision being taken to terminating the pregnancy.
3. Family First believes that a woman should be given comprehensive information as to the long term medical implications on her health including infertility, damage to the cervix, haemorrhage and death, as well as standard surgical risks as well as possible increased risks of breast cancer.
4. A women should be advised of the high risk of long term psychological impact of the abortion including profound and sometimes lasting post abortion grief and depression.
5. Information about independent counselling services
6. Information about available services and options for support and assistance through pregnancy and in caring for the child in infancy and beyond.

Family First supports the view that women seeking information on abortion be given adequate time in which to consider the advice and information before making a decision to proceed to termination ( this could taker the form of a 72 hour cooling off period).

Family First supports the position that a woman should clearly understand the range of support and assistance available to her in her decision to continue her pregnancy.

Family First will support measures that improve levels of support and assistance to women who have been impacted by crisis pregnancies.